



**WEEKLY UPDATE
FEBRUARY 14 - 20, 2021**

THIS WEEK

**EARLY WARNING
COASTAL COMMISSION TO CONSIDER DUNES RIDING
PHASE OUT AT MARCH 18TH MEETING
(SEE DETAILS ON PAGE 2 BELOW)**

NO BOS MEETING

LAFCO CANCELLED

LAST WEEK

BOS MEETING FEBRUARY 9TH

**MORE PLANNING STAFF TO EXPEDITE DIABLO CLOSURE APPROVED
ALLOCATION OF HOUSING FUNDS – LACKED VITAL DATA
BIG LAWSUIT ON WOMENS'S JAIL PROJECT – AMOUNT IN DISPUTE HIDDEN
LAST WEEK COVID WAS WORSE – BUSINESSES STRUGGLING
MAJOR WATER SUPPLY POLICY POSTPONED TO MARCH 2ND
POORLY CRAFTED CANNABIS APPEAL NEAR SAN MIGUEL DENIED**

**INTEGRATED WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY
POLYSTYRENE BAN BACK FOR CONSIDERATION**

**PLANNING COMMISSION
NON-STOREFRONT CANNABIS DISPENSARY IN NIPOMO**

COASTAL COMMISSION – DUNES ISSUES PUNTED TO MARCH 18TH – SEE DETAILS ON BELOW

COLAB IN DEPTH

SEE PAGE 14

THE CONSEQUENCES OF CALIFORNIA'S CENTRALLY PLANNED COMPASSION

California is not running out of open space, and claiming that expanding cities causes climate change is a preposterous lie

BY EDWARD RING

THE WORLD GOES ON WHILE AMERICA SLEEPS

BY VICTOR DAVIS HANSON

While we are busy devouring each other, China is smiling that once-feared American running-dog capitalists have become laughable Keystone Cop

THIS WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

EARLY WARNING COASTAL COMMISSION TO CONSIDER DUNES RIDING PHASE-OUT AT MARCH 18TH MEETING

On March 18, 2021 the Commission will consider a staff recommendation to phased shutdown of off-road riding and camping in the Oceano Dunes State Park over the next 5 years. The Board item with the specifics and timeline has not been posted as of this writing. As we have reported in the past, consensus in the Coastal Commission has been building over the past several years. The Commission has the power to shut down the current activities because it issued the original permit to the State Parks Department back in 1984, which authorized the riding and camping that had already been occurring since the early 20th century. During recent meetings a number of the 12 Coastal Commissioners

expressed opposition to the current off-road riding and use of motorized and towed off-road vehicles for camping on the beach.

The Commission can simply modify or rescind the permit.

What you can do:

1. Ask the Board of Supervisors to pass a Resolution to oppose the shutdown.
2. Residents of the cities of Grover Beach, Pismo Beach, Arroyo Grande, and San Luis Obispo should ask their respective City Councils to pass Resolutions to oppose the shutdown.

In each case, the Resolutions should be sent to the Governor, State Senate, State Assembly, the California Resources Secretary, and the Commission.

3. The actual Commission meeting will be virtual. That is, it will be conducted as a Zoom meeting. Therefore, there is no actual meeting site. The Commissioners will be at home or in their offices scattered throughout the State. Staffers may be in regional offices, home, or at the headquarters in San Francisco.

This situation diminishes the ability to the public to speak and demonstrate massive opposition. For this reason, the locals who oppose shutdown and the various local and statewide pro-riding and camping organizations should rally at the State Capitol on March 18, 2021.

The Commissioners are appointed by the Governor, the Speaker of the Assembly, and the ProTem of the State Senate. If tens of thousands of riders, campers, and recreation enthusiasts show up at the Capitol and run a peaceable structured series of speeches outside and permitted teach-ins on the inside, the Governor, Legislature, and Sacramento bureaucrats would have to pay attention. The presence of thousands of off-road campers, off-road vehicles, and ATV's would be very impressive.

There are a number of hot links in the Coastal Commission bulletin below. They provide insight into the Commissioners' growing antipathy to dunes riding and vehicle camping on the beach.

COASTAL COMMISSION BULLETIN

Oceano Dunes

The Park

The California Department of Parks and Recreation operates a large State Park in southern San Luis Obispo County in the Guadalupe-Nipomo dunes complex known as Oceano Dunes.

The Park

The California Department of Parks and Recreation operates a large State Park in southern San Luis Obispo County in the Guadalupe-Nipomo dunes complex known as Oceano Dunes. The 3,500-acre Park extends along eight miles of beach, shoreline, and dunes, and some two miles inland, fronting the underserved community of Oceano. The Park currently provides a mix of uses including beach day use, birdwatching, horseback riding, fishing, and hiking, but the primary draw at the Park is driving cars, trucks and off-highway vehicles (OHVs) on the beach and in the dunes. It's the only State Park in California that allows recreational driving on the beach and in the dunes.

Park issues

The California Coastal Commission issued a coastal permit to State Parks in the 1980s for operations at Oceano Dunes, and periodically reviews and updates that permit. The Commission has found that driving at the Park has degraded dune habitats, harmed native species, caused air quality and public health issues, and made it difficult for the public to walk, swim and enjoy other activities at the beach. The Commission required State Parks to address these concerns when it last reviewed the permit in 2019. Among other things, the Commission directed State Parks to consider reducing driving activities that contribute to these problems, and to evaluate phasing out OHV use altogether. In response, State Parks prepared a draft plan detailing how they would like to continue managing the Park. That plan proposes to maintain and even expand vehicular and OHV use, including new campgrounds, OHV related facilities and new OHV access to the Park near Oso Flaco Lake and at the Phillips 66 site. The Commission is reviewing this plan and is scheduled to hold a virtual public hearing on these matters on March 18, 2021.

Why is this Coastal Commission meeting important?

The Commission is a state government agency that preserves and protects California's coast and ocean for the public. It does this by looking at how development affects the environment and coastal access. Agency staff make recommendations to a voting board of Commissioners, who make the final decision on proposals. In this case, the tentative staff recommendation for the March 18th hearing is to phase out off-roading over five years and to expand different types of recreational uses that won't harm coastal resources at the Park. The staff recommendation will encourage car-camping on the beach between West Grand and Pier Avenues, as well as some remote hike-in/bike-in camping. Off-roading enthusiasts will continue to be able to ride at eight other inland State Parks that allow vehicular recreation, as well as at nearly 70 other public OHV areas in California.

Expected outcomes under the staff recommendation

The Commission staff recommendation would not close Oceano Dunes. Rather, the recommendation would enable the Commission to partner with State Parks, the local community, and visitors to the area to reimagine the Park operating in a more environmentally sustainable and legally consistent way. The Park would continue to offer unique experiences such as car camping on the beach, and a range of other activities, from walking and swimming at the beach to horseback riding, birding, fishing and hiking the dunes.

Under the staff recommendation, the Park would:

- *Provide a unique \$10 per campsite car camping experience and vehicular ADA access between West Grand and Pier Avenues*
- *Provide non-vehicular public recreational access south of Pier Avenue to allow for beach day use, equestrian use, biking, hiking, fishing, birdwatching and other activities. This would close Pier Avenue to vehicular entry, and provide some low-intensity hike-in/bike-in camping opportunities further south*
- *Implement enhanced habitat protection measures, including in the southern portion of the Park, and near Oso Flaco Lake.*

The staff recommendation would initially increase beach/vehicular camping space, and then after the five year transition provide roughly the same amount of camping space currently available at the Park but move it further north. The camping would then be closer to Pismo Beach, Grover Beach, and Oceano businesses near West Grand and Pier Avenues, allowing campers to walk, visit, and shop in those areas. Closing the Pier Avenue vehicle ramp will enable the underserved community of Oceano to directly connect to its beach, which could bring with it the types of opportunities that help other California beach towns prosper. These changes are likely to impact existing businesses catering primarily to OHV uses, but there would also be expanded opportunities for businesses catering to lower-impact beach and dune uses. Oceano Dunes would continue to be a Park that is attractive for visitors, particularly for families looking for unique lower-cost recreational and outdoor opportunities in the five cities area.

Why is public participation important?

It is important that the Coastal Commission hear the public's vision for the future of the Park. That includes community leaders, business owners, elected representatives, residents and visitors. Previous Coastal Commission hearings on the Park have drawn a majority of speakers with strong single-issue views such as those who support OHV use and those who oppose it. While these views are important, the upcoming hearing is also an opportunity for the people to comment on what they want to see for the Park and its future more broadly. Whether those opinions support the staff recommendation or oppose it, we encourage everyone's participation. As indicated above, the Coastal Commission is expected to make an important decision on the future of the Park on March 18, 2021, and now is the time to provide your input, whether by sending in comments in writing or by testifying at the virtual hearing on March 18th, or both.

How to participate

- *Submit comments by email at OceanoDunesReview@coastal.ca.gov*
- *Submit comments by mail to 725 Front Street, Suite 300, Santa Cruz, CA 95060*
- *Speak to the Coastal Commissioners at the hearing on March 18, 2021 using your telephone, cell phone, computer or tablet. Instructions to do so are on the Commission's webpage at www.coastal.ca.gov*
- *For any questions, contact **Kevin Kahn**, the Coastal Commission's Central Coast District Supervisor and its lead coastal planner on Oceano matters at 831-427-4863 or kevin.kahn@coastal.ca.gov*

Key references

Documents associated with the Coastal Commission's July 2019 action

- [July 11, 2019 report](#)
- [Summary of action taken](#)
- [Commission direction letter to State Parks dated July 12, 2019](#)

Documents associated with State Parks' PWP progress updates 2019 and 2020

- [Staff report for October 2019 update](#)
- [Staff report for February 2020 update](#)
- [Staff report for July 2020 update](#)
- [Staff report for October 2020 update](#)

Documents associated with State Parks' proposed plans in response to the Commission's July 2019 action and direction

- [State Parks draft Public Works Plan \(PWP\)](#)
- [State Parks draft PWP supporting documents: draft Existing Conditions Report](#)
- [State Parks draft PWP supporting documents: draft Environmental Impact Report \(EIR\)](#)
- [State Parks draft PWP supporting documents: Oceano Dunes Biodiversity Management Plan](#)
- [State Parks draft PWP supporting documents: draft Habitat Conservation Plan \(HCP\)](#)
- [State Parks draft PWP supporting documents: draft HCP EIR](#)
- [USFWS draft Environmental Assessment \(EA\) on State Parks draft HCP](#)
- [Commission staff comments on the draft HCP \(and supporting draft EIR and draft EA\)](#)

Documents associated with the Coastal Commission's March 18, 2021 hearing

- Commission staff recommendation (not available yet)
- Commission staff recommendation synopsis and executive summary (not available yet)
- [Oceano Dunes summary](#)
- [Oceano Dunes FAQ](#)

Documents translated to Spanish associated with the Coastal Commission's March 18, 2021 hearing (Documentos traducidos al español asociados con la audiencia de la Comisión Costera del 18 de marzo de 2021)

- Commission staff recommendation synopsis and executive summary in Spanish (not available yet) (Sinopsis de la recomendación del personal de la Comisión y resumen ejecutivo en español (aún no disponible))
- [Oceano Dunes summary in Spanish \(Resumen de Oceano Dunes en español\)](#)
- [Oceano Dunes FAQ in Spanish \(Preguntas frecuentes de Oceano Dunes en español\)](#)

No Board of Supervisors Meeting on Tuesday, February 16, 2021 (Not Scheduled)

The next scheduled meeting is set for Tuesday, March 2, 2021.

Local Agency Formation Commission Meeting of Thursday, February 18, 2021 (Cancelled)

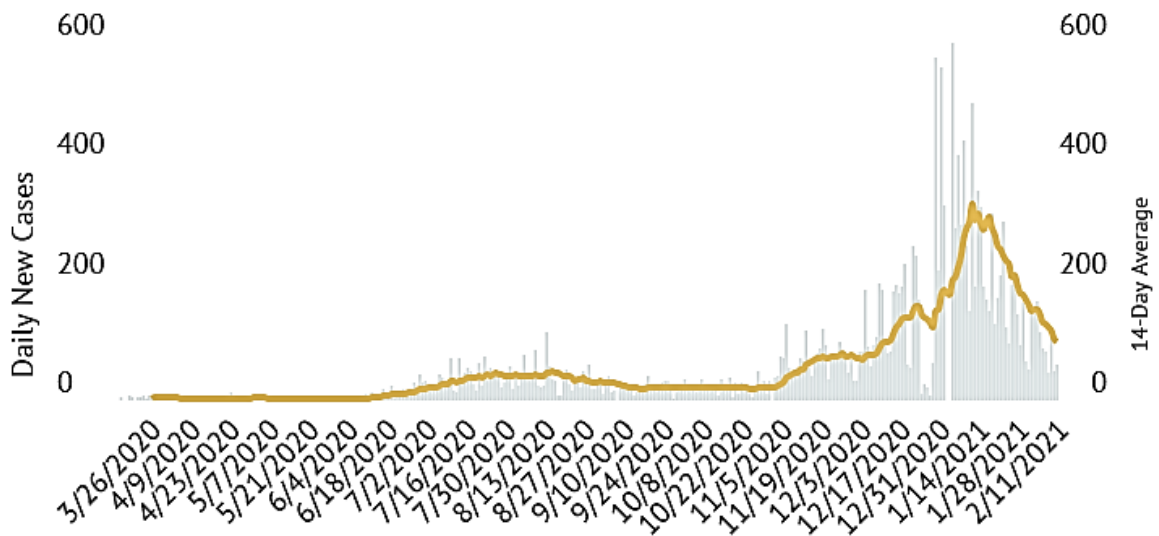
No reason for the cancellation was provided in the notice.

ONGOING AND NEW ISSUES

Even though there is not a Board, meeting various issues occur.

Issue 1 - COVID Update: Daily New Cases (and 14-Day Average). The incidence of new cases seems to be declining sharply. One theory is that the cases generated by socializing and family get togethers during the holidays have passed through the system. It is not known yet how new variants of the virus will impact the numbers in the future. Hopefully natural herd immunity is building, aided by the growing number of people receiving vaccinations. What happens if a tipping point is reached and the virus can no longer sustain itself? How will this point be determined?

The Board and County staff should assign a team as “reopening managers” to facilitate the communications and advice to communities if the County should start passing through the less severe tiers of regulation. Each business and job that can be saved is an urgent priority.



36 (9 ICU)**

SLO County Residents with COVID-19 in Hospital

Issue - 2 Morro Bay Mass Battery Storage Site. The SLO Tribune reports that a Texas company has re-approached the City of Morro Bay about building an industrial scale electric battery site behind the existing and closed power plant. The article stated in part:

An energy company that pulled a plan to build a battery storage plant in Morro Bay is back with a new proposal — and it’s far more ambitious than the first go-round.

Morro Bay Power Plant owner Vistra Energy had applied for a permit last year to build a [4-acre, 200-megawatt battery storage plant](#) behind its mothballed power facility. Then last summer, the company withdrew the project from the city — without explanation.

Now it’s back with a new 22-acre project, which, at five times the footprint and triple the power output, would be the largest in the country.

The article goes on to point out that a lengthy permitting process will be required. It is also possible that the new facility could be tied into offshore windmills, which are being proposed by a separate company.

The future of the existing power plant and smokestacks is uncertain. The article stated that dismantling of the old plant could cost \$20 million.

One option might be to convert the old plant to a commercial, an educational, or even a residential attraction. There are many examples throughout the nation and Europe.



Reuse of a generator building mixed use concept.

Perhaps the County's economic development contractor, REACH, could help the City and the various developers to pull this together.

LAST WEEK'S HIGHLIGHTS

Board of Supervisors Meeting of Tuesday, January 9, 2021 (Completed)

Item 10 - Addition of 2 New Senior Level Planners to Process PG&E's application to decommission the Diablo Nuclear Power Plant. Two new high end staff jobs were approved without discussion or debate on the consent calendar. A higher level manager position had already been approved at a previous meeting. More problematically, the action continues the Board's long-term passive acceptance of the closure of the power plant.

Readers may remember that we asked the Board to consider analyzing the environmental impact of the 8 million metric tonnes of CO₂ released annually, which will no longer be offset when the plant is closed. The replacement energy generated will largely be from natural gas. The Board did not show any interest in this subject.

Key issues include the reuse of the actual site of the plant, as well as thousands of acres owned by PG&E and affiliated owners. The enviro groups wish to convert the entire area into a passive nature zone with no economic activities.

There will be a massive environmental impact report (EIR) that must tackle the local and regional impacts of the closure and dismantling operation. Since the plant forestalls 8 million metric tonnes of CO₂ generation each year, which will have to be replaced mostly by natural gas, what if the preferred alternative is to maintain the plant open? Will a future Board overrule a class one CEQA finding that would deny the project on the grounds that closure would result in 8 million new metric tonnes of CO₂ being spewed into California's atmosphere?

It might be worthwhile to assess this situation as a separate pre-project before launching the whole thing and wasting millions of dollars. Where will all the power come from for the mandatory electric vehicles?

Another issue is the reuse of the actual site of the plant as well as thousands of acres owned by PG&E and affiliated owners.

It is too bad that the County did not create a project team in 2010 to assist PG&E with relicensing instead of throwing up barriers every step of the way. You get what the dumb, brainwashed boomers voted for. Your children and grandkids will suffer accordingly. Meanwhile, we have the highest electrical rates in the nation and supply problems to boot.

The whole episode is a shameful and dumb policy. The progressive left is forcing us into societal suicide.

Item 11 - Request to reserve \$1,348,831 in federal Housing and Urban Development funds and \$265,250 in County Inclusionary Housing In-lieu Fee (Title 29) funds for four affordable housing projects. The grants were approved on the consent calendar without question or comment.

Background: The projects may be all right in so far as they go to provide some housing units with supposedly below market rents. Unfortunately, the Board letter does not provide the projected rent rates. Nor do the attachments provide the per month maintenance per unit and operating costs of the not-for-profit landlords. Thus, the Board of Supervisors actually has no idea of the real benefits or cost effectiveness of the projects.

Similarly, what will be the income limits by family size and unit size required of the projects. How will the tenants be selected?

In other words, what is the taxpayer's bang for the buck? The write-up only shows the Federal and county subsidies to the project. What are the total costs, and most importantly, what are the per unit costs for each project all in? How can the Board judge the overall effectiveness without this fundamental data?

Item 14 - More Cost Overruns in the Women's Jail Project. This new nearly \$1 million was also approved on the consent calendar without any public questioning from Board members.

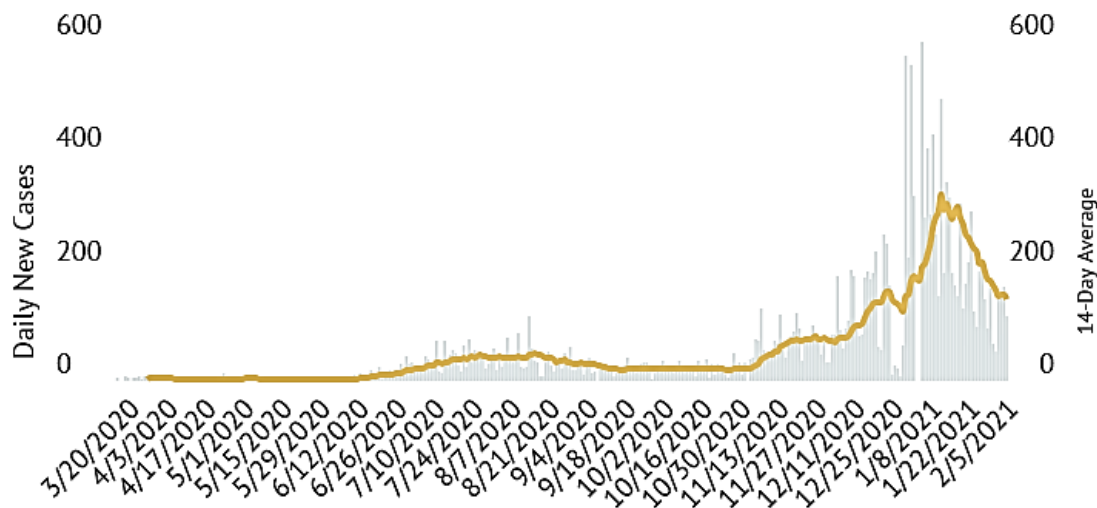
Background: The project has been troubled almost from the start. There have been successive rounds of cost overruns. Now to frost the cake, the main contractor is suing the County in a dispute over change orders and costs.

Contract close-out with the contractor, Roebelen Construction, Inc., is ongoing due to construction claims filed by the contractor. The contractor has filed formal litigation against the County and involved several subcontractors and consultants. The case has been designated as a complex case by the court due to the multiple parties and counterclaims involved. County Counsel provides legal assistance to the Department of Public Works in the management and execution of its Capital Projects program, including the Women’s Jail Expansion project. County Counsel and Public Works retained outside counsel and technical experts early in the claims process to assist in managing the litigation process, as well as analyze the claims in order to support the County’s legal defense.

Now the staff is requesting an additional \$952,000 to cover costs of outside expert counsel to help defend the County. Significantly, the write-up does not inform the public of the amount in dispute or the items in dispute. The Board may be party to this data from closed session, but there is no reason to hide it from the public, as its disclosure would not jeopardize the County’s litigation position or strategy.

Item 19 - COVID Status. The Board complimented the staff for their relatively smooth efforts in using all the vaccine doses that the County can obtain each week.

Daily New Cases (and 14-Day Average)



Why do cases seem to have dipped and then spiked in recent days? (12/29/20) The State recently started a new process to rapidly assign suspected cases to a jurisdiction. Those cases must then be inspected at the local level and reclassified as a confirmed case by a local health official to ensure the accuracy of local data. This new process causes a slight backlog of the number of new confirmed cases reported locally, creating an artificial lull. We are working to correct the issue, but we may see a backlog for a week or so. Regardless, COVID-19 transmission is surging in SLO County and everyone should be taking extra precautions to stop the surge.

45 (9 ICU)**

SLO County Residents with COVID-19 in Hospital

Item 22 - Submittal of a request to 1) approve the recommended allocations for the California Emergency Solutions Grant (Round-2) funding in the amount of \$5,522,401 and 2) authorize the Director of the Department of Social Services, or his designee, to enter into contracts and made amendments needed in order to carry out the program. The grants to the various agencies were approved as the staff recommended. The Board declined to consider the big picture issues, as it has piecemealed the flow of funding.

Background: In the big picture, this process is only one part of a much larger set of past, current, and future grants that have been generated under the rubric of COVID impacts on the homeless. All in and by the end of this year, it is expected that the County will have received \$33.4 million for COVID related homeless assistance. Imagine if this amount could have been used to leverage other private and public dollars to create real solutions, such as homeless RV campgrounds, a homeless mobile home park, homeless tiny home parks, and single room occupancy housing.

Instead it is being used to fund services, which although humane, are not permanent solutions. When the COVID musical chairs grants end, we will be back to ground zero. At that point there will be huge pressure from the progressive left to make the extra ordinary funding permanent. Never let a crisis go to waste.

This is the latest round of state funding for the homeless related to COVID. The County passes most of the money through to not-for-profit homeless contractors and rakes off some for its own administrative expenses. The Homeless Services Oversight Council or HSOC administers a competitive process for awarding grants.

Item 23 - A Complicated and Perhaps Bamboozling Recommendation Related to Water Supply in the County. The item was withdrawn from the agenda and continued to the March 2, 2021 meeting, as it was generating many questions and some controversy. The Board was about to be presented with a proposed revision of its long-standing supply contract with the State Department of Water Resources (DWR). The benefit seems to be that the new contract adds flexibility that allows the County and member jurisdictions to sell surplus water to outside entities in some years and buy water in others.

Background: To see the actual contract, click on the link below. The text describes under what circumstances and the calculation methods for buying and selling unused water.

<https://agenda.slocounty.ca.gov/iip/sanluisobispo/file/getfile/129629>

The text seems to say that it is real water and not certificates. However, if the County water agency, a city, or a water district has surplus stored water somewhere in the State system, could it sell it as a credit to a developer in Temecula or somewhere for purposes of meeting water supply requirements for a permit? Is it then possible that in a bad (dry) year, when the supplier to the development needed the water and sent it forward, the County and/or other water purveyors within the county would have to use other (perhaps groundwater?) and/or forego some of its own needed supply? Would this be tantamount to virtual water exporting?

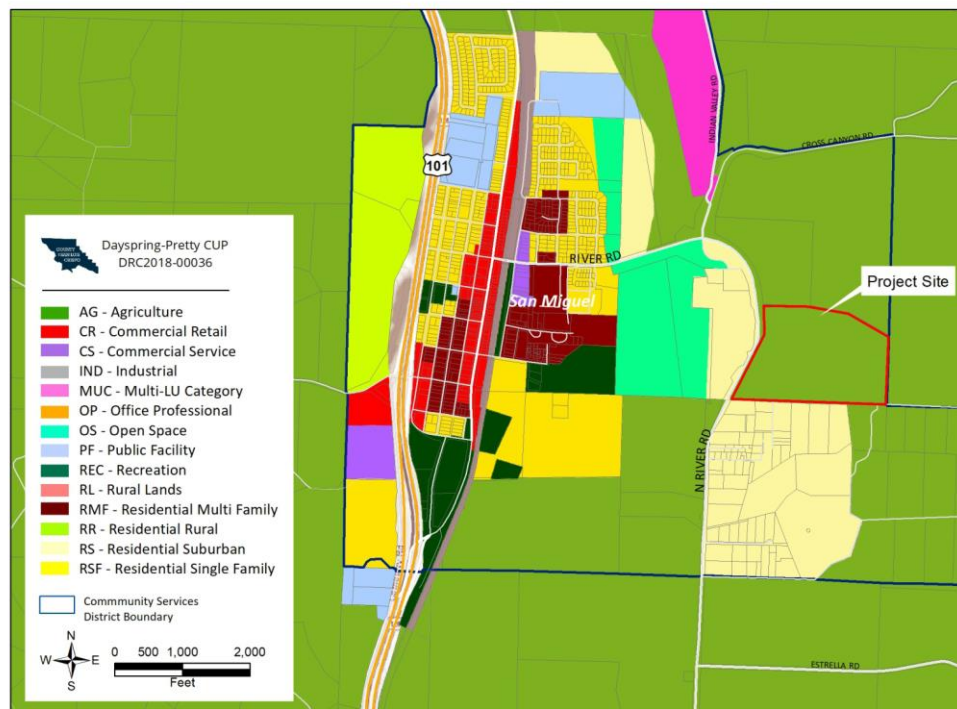
One must ask what are the downsides and/or risks. Why should the DWR and other power players in the California water world agree to amend this and similar contracts all over the state all of sudden in 2021? The power guys have sheered the sheep before. Something is up.

Item 25 - Hearing to consider an appeal (APPL2019-00019) by Kenneth Cottrell and Stephanie Shakofsky of the Planning Commission's approval of a request by 13350 River Road LLC (formerly Helios Dayspring) for a Conditional Use Permit (DRC2018-00036) to establish up to three acres of outdoor cannabis cultivation, up to 22,000 square feet of indoor mixed-light cannabis cultivation, up to 27,570 square feet of ancillary cannabis nursery, and operation of a non-storefront dispensary at 13350 River Road, east of the community of San Miguel. The appeal was denied on a 3/2 vote with Supervisors Compton and Arnold dissenting. A number of speakers both opposed and supported the project.

Background: Former San Francisco resident, carpetbagger, and losing 1st District Supervisor candidate Stephanie Shakofsky had filed the sloppy appeal. The permit application is for a 3-acre operation with outdoor and indoor cannabis grows on land which had formerly been a vineyard. The applicant had been attempting to obtain the permit over 4 years and finally received the approval of the Planning Commission.

The appeal is technically defective in several regards, and staff strongly recommends denial of the appeal and approval of the project. There are several residential subdivisions in the vicinity where residents have voiced opposition. Their problem is that the proposed project meets the County's zoning requirements. They are worried about odor, traffic, stray light, and water consumption.

Denial of the project at this point would have required the Board to make substantive findings (reasons) for the denial. This would have been difficult under the circumstances after all the vetting to which the project has been subjected.



**Integrated Waste Management Authority Meeting of Wednesday, February 10, 2021
(Completed)**

Item 10 - Ordinance No. 2019-1 An Ordinance Regulating Polystyrene and Expanded Polystyrene (Eps) Food Containers and Products. The proposed ordinance was back for consideration. It had been proposed last year but was tabled due to COVID. Rational folks said: “Wait a minute, we need polystyrene containers for take-out food during the pandemic.” The pandemic is still here, and the State Legislature is working on a state-wide ban. Moreover, the staff is heavily tasked working on a new State mandate to recycle wet garbage and food. They don’t have time to tackle preparing and working with the community on a new ban, which will impact supermarkets, drug stores, restaurants, most businesses involved in packing and shipping goods, etc. Staff also recommends that any such bans be left to the individual cities. Thus, San Luis Obispo City can continue on a politically correct march to suicide without dragging the rest of the community in.

If the IWMA Board does direct that the ordinance be brought forward, staff indicates that a \$105,000 consultant will be required.

Imagine how stupid the progressives are. You pick up a salad at the deli and they have to put it in a cardboard container, which leaks all over the place before you get it back to the office.

Planning Commission Meeting of Thursday, February 11, 2021 (Completed)

Item 7 - Hearing to consider a request by Golden State Cannabis for a Development Plan / Coastal Development Permit (DRC2020-00146) to establish the phased development of a 1,500-square-foot combined non-storefront dispensary, distribution, and cannabis manufacturing business within an existing 12,000-square-foot building. No new structures are proposed. The project site is located within the Industrial land use category located at 2115 Willow Road (State Route 1) Unit C approximately two miles west of the community of Nipomo. The project site is located in the Callender-Garrett Village Area in the South County (Coastal) Planning Area. Also, to be considered is the environmental determination that the project is categorically exempt under CEQA. The permit was approved unanimously. The applicant had a very complete and technically clear presentation.



COLAB IN DEPTH

IN FIGHTING THE TROUBLESOME, LOCAL DAY-TO-DAY ASSAULTS ON OUR FREEDOM AND PROPERTY, IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO KEEP IN MIND THE LARGER UNDERLYING IDEOLOGICAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC CAUSES

THE CONSEQUENCES OF CALIFORNIA'S CENTRALLY PLANNED COMPASSION

California is not running out of open space, and claiming that expanding cities causes climate change is a preposterous lie

BY EDWARD RING

Sixty years ago, when California was governed by people who were sane pragmatists, homes were affordable and very few people were homeless. To support new housing, government funds were focused on building enabling infrastructure. California's freeways and expressways connected new suburbs to urban cores, and the California Water Project delivered abundant water to the growing population. As a result, industry, jobs, and people poured into California, attracted by the beautiful weather and the low cost-of-living. Back then, California was the best place on earth to live.

For at least the last twenty years, California politics have been controlled by leftist ideologues. Their policies are impractical, the consequences are insane. Homes are unaffordable and entire cities have been taken over by homeless encampments. California's infrastructure is neglected, and the ability of private developers to profitably build homes that normal people can afford has been destroyed by overregulation. In 2020, for the first time since achieving statehood over 170 years ago, California's [population actually declined](#).

How California's politics devolved between 1960 and 2020 to put the state into its current predicament is a long story, but two overriding principles governed the descent into madness and dysfunction: a preference for central planning and misguided compassion. With compassion as the moral imperative driving concern over poverty, racial injustice, and, more recently, [climate change](#), California's politicians turned increasingly to central planning to solve these crises. And because central planning does not work, and has never worked, the crises have just gotten worse.

The evidence used to justify California's centrally planned, supposedly compassionate policies is "disparate outcomes." The power of this concept derives from its quantifiable, quasi-scientific veneer. As soon as a statistic is discovered that identifies how some group has collectively achieved less than some other group, a moral imperative is created to correct the injustice. In terms of groups with which to construct these statistical bludgeons, there is infinite material: men vs women, cis vs trans, straight vs gay, and white people vs people of color. In all cases, the former is the privileged oppressor, and the latter is the disadvantaged, underprivileged victim.

It is easy enough to see the appeal of these concepts to leftist ideologues. The compassionate, collective response to injustice requires a powerful, centralized government response, in order to correct the

injustice and uplift an entire community to the status it deserves. But both of these key concepts, compassion and a centrally planned solution, are deeply flawed. Central planning is inherently flawed.

Compassion is flawed in its execution.

The obligations of compassion must include a recognition of human nature. When disparate group outcomes are mitigated, and equality is enforced by the state, it creates an incentive for mediocrity and indifference. This is because under enforced equality, the worse a group performs, the more it will get, and the better a group performs, the more will be taken from them. So why work?

The Moral Necessity of Economic Stratification

Comparing how California handled housing sixty years ago compared to today can help explain why central planning to eliminate disparate group outcomes is a fool's errand. The much maligned reality of housing sixty years ago was that it was economically stratified. To the extent this was driven by redlining and other racist policies, this stratification was immoral. But well established laws now prohibit racial discrimination. What was not immoral, however, was the overall concept of economic stratification. How this worked requires a moral defense.

Using local zoning laws to create stable neighborhoods, California's suburbs were able to develop in a predictable pattern around every city. All of it was market driven. Close to the urban core, higher density housing including apartments were built. Further from the center of town, neighborhoods with detached homes were built. On the periphery, larger homes on larger lots were built. There were exceptions, but the market, relying on the stability of zoning laws, drove the process. For example, some cities had neighborhoods with larger homes on larger lots that were situated very close to the urban core. But in those cases, these homes were highly sought after and were more expensive than similar housing on the urban periphery. Occasionally, low density neighborhoods in particularly desirable spots became economically untenable and were rezoned. But this happened organically, judiciously, and locally, and not through centrally planned edicts.

The point isn't merely that all of this worked economically because politicians had not yet created unaffordable housing through overregulation. The point is there was a moral worth to this economic stratification. People who lived in inner city apartments knew that if they worked hard they could save money and buy a detached home in a suburban neighborhood. People who lived in suburban neighborhoods knew that if they worked hard, they could move into a bigger home with a bigger lot. All of them relied on zoning to protect the ambiance of whatever it was they'd worked for and achieved so far. And people who were out of work or were marginally employed might end up on skid row, where residential hotels charged by the week for a room.

This is not the description of a perfect world. But it worked better than what we have today. As a percentage of the population, homelessness was far less, and homes were affordable. People across all income groups had the ability to invest and build multi-generational wealth. What is happening today in the name of compassion for the homeless is yielding only failure. Billions have been spent. Billions more will be spent. *And it is making the problem worse.*

The Compassionate Destruction of Venice Beach

A harrowing example of what is being done to California by its politicians in the name of compassion is the [destruction of Venice Beach](#), which used to be one of the most charming neighborhoods in Los

Angeles. The estimated number of homeless living in this three square mile district now exceeds 2,000. Despite a median price for [homes in Venice Beach](#) at over \$2.1 million, instead of relocating homeless to shelters in less expensive parts of Los Angeles County, homeless shelters and “permanent supportive housing” is being constructed in the heart of Venice Beach at staggering costs.

Currently there are [eleven homeless housing projects](#) either proposed or already built in Venice Beach. The cost to taxpayers for these projects is estimated in the hundreds of millions. At best, they will house 700 people, barely one-third of the homeless currently living in Venice Beach. One of these proposals, the [Reese Davidson Community](#), is to be built on a 3 acre parcel currently used for community beach parking. It will have 140 units, at an [estimated cost of well over \\$100 million](#). This is insane.

Voters and politicians sincerely motivated by compassion need to reflect carefully on these costs, which are fairly typical. Imagine how much could be done with \$100 million, if it was spent on shelter housing in less expensive places. But thanks to the compassionate value of inclusion, and the allegation that people who work hard to pay exorbitant prices to live in Venice Beach are “privileged,” the zoning laws that lead to economically stratified neighborhoods have broken down. And it gets worse.

Obviously offering free housing in a community located along a beach in Southern California just creates a magnet for even more people to arrive, unhoused and unemployed. But with the [passage of Prop. 47](#), California has effectively decriminalized possession of hard drugs and petty theft, and to the extent laws remain on the books, Los Angeles County [District Attorney George Gascon](#) is not adequately enforcing them. And thanks to the federal “[Housing First](#)” mandate coming out of the Obama administration in 2009, no shelter or supportive housing project can receive public funds if they make sobriety and job training a condition of admittance. More insanity.

Venice Beach today is a crime haven. A recent report by the Venice Beach [Public Health and Safety Committee](#) found that the homeless shelters and “housing hubs” located in Venice Beach have been the source of the majority of police actions. But with the besieged LAPD short on officers and funds, and with a crime-friendly District Attorney, nothing can curb the rising crime. The reality of these housing projects is that if they were a private business and were generating this number of police responses, they would be shut down. The model is broken.

How to Solve the Homeless Crisis and Make Housing Affordable Again

The current direction of homeless and housing policies in California will lead either to an economic crash as the burden of government subsidies and entitlements finally becomes unsustainable, or, perhaps worse, California’s middle class will be utterly destroyed as “inclusive” zoning destroys residential suburbs. Subsidized investors will purchase and demolish detached homes, replacing them with apartments where people will live for free and with no conditions on their behavior. Only the very wealthiest neighborhoods will be able to afford perpetual litigation to chase away these developers. The incentive for people to work will disappear.

There is an alternative to this dismal future. Policymakers can learn from the example of 1960s California. They can learn from the mistakes that were made, of course, but they can also restore the best practices that made California such a wonderful place to live. They may recognize that almost *everybody, regardless of ethnicity*, aspires to raise families in detached homes in spacious suburbs. Biased surveys that make claims to the contrary omit a crucial opening phrase from the question: “IF you could afford it,” would you prefer to live in a detached home with a yard? That’s a big IF.

Instead of seeding intact neighborhoods with scandalously expensive subsidized housing projects that turn into crime infested drug dens, local authorities should be able to enforce stricter laws against intoxication, vagrancy and petty theft. They should be able to move offenders out of otherwise pleasant neighborhoods and into supervised, inexpensive tent encampments where they can sober up and get put to work. Central planning from Sacramento should not be imposing one-size-fits-all homeless and housing solutions on California's cities and counties, especially since the "solutions" coming out of Sacramento are just making problems worse.

To solve the housing shortage, which is politically contrived, the laws that are cordoning off California's cities and only permitting development inside preexisting boundaries must be scrapped. California is [not running out of open space](#), and claiming that expanding cities causes climate change is a preposterous lie. Deregulate the housing industry, and spend public [money on freeways](#) and [water projects](#) instead of [high speed rail](#) and [subsidized housing](#). Abandoning those boondoggles will free up tens of billions to build new enabling infrastructure.

There is no reason why Californians cannot have the same opportunities that were available to their grandparents, two generations ago. But they need to recognize that "compassionate" policies that only result in increasing the numbers of homeless people, tragically addicted to drugs and crime, is not compassion. And central planning designed to rescue victims of "disparate outcomes" will merely serve to make everyone oppressed, as it destroys the motivation and ability for people to pursue individual achievement.

These are tough realities, but acknowledging them can lead to beautiful outcomes.

Edward Ring

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THE WORLD GOES ON WHILE AMERICA SLEEPS

BY VICTOR DAVIS HANSON

While we are busy devouring each other, China is smiling that once-feared American running-dog capitalists have become laughable Keystone Cops

The Democratically-controlled Senate spends thousands of collective hours conducting an impeachment trial against a president who is no longer president. The acquittal is predetermined, as in the first impeachment effort a year ago—and known to be so to the Democratic prosecutors.

The constitutionally mandated presiding judge—the chief justice of the United States—refused to show up.

Chief Justice John Roberts apparently believes an impeachment trial of a private citizen is either a waste of time or unconstitutional—or both.

The Democratic House of Representatives is busy ferreting out purportedly extremist Republican members. For the first time in memory, one party now removes committee members of the other.

Yet for each Republican outlier, there is a corresponding Democratic firebrand member who has either called for violence or voiced anti-Semitic slurs—and yet will not be removed from House committees.

So the asymmetrical tit-for-tat continues.

The subtext to this madness is that the Democratic Congress, the new administration, the administrative state, and the political Left are obsessed with dismembering the presidential corpse of now citizen Donald Trump.

Apparently, they fear that one day he will rise from the infernal regions to wreak his revenge.

The Debt Piles Up

Meanwhile, life in America goes on.

Yet few of our leaders are much worried about the existential crises left unaddressed by their obsessions with the ghost of Trump.

Take the debt. It is now \$28 trillion. And it is growing at almost \$2 trillion a year. No one in Washington talks about reducing the annual budget deficit. Much less do officials find ways to balance the budget. The idea of paying off the monstrous debt remains a fantasy.

Instead, our elected representatives argue over whether to borrow another \$1 trillion or more likely \$2 trillion, without worry of where it comes from or how it will be repaid.

But money is not completely a construct.

We will eventually pay for our profligacy either with steeper taxes, higher inflation, 1970s-like stagflation, or permanent zero interest. Or eventually, America will renounce its debt and destroy the credibility of the U.S. government.

Meanwhile, hundreds of billions of dollars and countless hours of once productive labor are diverted to unproductive ideological censorship, career canceling, and indoctrination.

Our allies like democratic France warn America that it is cannibalizing itself—and becoming dangerous to others. Our enemies like the totalitarian Chinese are delighted with our suicidal wokeness.

The cost is not just the expense of cleaning up the billions of dollars of destruction from the summer riots, the thousands of memorials and statues destroyed and defaced, the hundreds of schools and buildings to be renamed.

Far more consequential is the suppression of creative thinking—from humanistic study to scientific research.

P.C. Stagnation

The Islamic world, as the historian Bernard Lewis once observed, stagnated in the 19th and 20th centuries, once radical Islamists began squelching all free inquiry that bothered the madrassas.

Humanities and science were perverted from 1932 to 1945 in Germany by the pollution of Nazi racial censors.

What was written or advanced in Communist Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union is largely discredited, given that commissar hacks determined the rules of publication and research.

Something similarly frightening is now occurring in the United States.

Scholars, journalists, artists, and educators feel they must mouth politically correct platitudes. They constantly hedge their public discourse in fear of career cancellation.

They strain to synchronize their research with some approved woke ideology to save their livelihoods.

When professors must write “diversity statements,” and hire, promote, and fire on the basis of race, the model is not the U.S. Constitution, but something out of contemporary China.

Suicidal Tendencies

No one pays much attention that our capital is now weaponized with soldiers in camouflage and barbed wire.

Not since the Civil War has Washington resembled such a vast police state. Ex-military officers who once warned Donald Trump not to deploy federal troops to ensure the safety of the White House from Antifa and BLM demonstrators now are silent about a veritable army deployed in Washington.

Joe Biden has signaled that all new pipeline construction is over.

Fracking on public lands is taboo. The border is to become wide open. Federal immigration law is now nullified.

Americans may soon have to be tested before flying into or out of the country. But undocumented aliens will not be so COVID-19 certified when—illegally—they cross the border.

Iran is bankrupt, isolated, and roundly despised by most of the countries in the Middle East. Now America is doing its best to resuscitate this most radical and anti-American regime in the world—at the expense of our allies in the Arab world, Israel, and America’s own interests.

While we are busy devouring each other, China is smiling that once-feared American running-dog capitalists have become laughable Keystone Cops.

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